WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A match circuit for implementation in a general purpose performance counter ("GPPC") connected to a bus carrying debug data, the match circuit comprising logic for activating a match signal when a selected *N*-bit portion of the debug data matches an *N*-bit threshold for all bits selected by an *N*-bit match mask ("mmask").

2. The match circuit of claim 1 wherein *N* is equal to sixteen.

3. The match circuit of claim 1 wherein the *N*-bit threshold is provided from a control status register ("CSR").

4. The match circuit of claim 1 wherein the *N*-bit mmask is provided from a control status register ("CSR").

5. The match circuit of claim 1 wherein the debug data comprises 80 bits.

6. The match circuit of claim 5 wherein the debug data comprises eight 16-bit portions aligned on 10-bit blocks.

7. The match circuit of claim 6 wherein the selected portion comprises one of the eight 16-bit portions.

8. The match circuit of claim 1 wherein the logic for activating a match signal comprises logic for comparing a binary bit of the selected debug data portion with a corresponding bit of the threshold and outputting a binary bit indicative of whether the compared bits match.

9. Circuitry for implementation in a general purpose performance counter ("GPPC") connected to a bus carrying debug data, the circuitry for analyzing a selected portion of the debug data, comprising:

logic means for activating a match signal when the selected portion of the debug data includes a specified bit pattern;

logic means for activating a threshold signal based on a comparison between at least a subset of the selected debug data portion and a threshold value; and

logic means for outputting one of the match signal and the threshold signal in response to a selection control signal.

10. The circuitry of claim 9 wherein the logic means for activating a match signal further comprises:

an exclusive NOR ("XNOR") circuit operating to perform a bit-wise XNOR operation between the selected debug data portion and a threshold register that is as wide as the selected debug data portion;

an OR circuit for ORing an inverted mask ("mmask") with the output of the XNOR circuit; and

an AND circuit operating to AND the OR circuit's output to generate the match signal.

11. The circuitry of claim 10 wherein the mmask is provided from a control status register ("CSR").

12. The circuitry of claim 10 wherein the threshold register is provided as a control status register ("CSR").

13. The circuitry of claim 10 wherein the debug data comprises 80 bits.

14. The circuitry of claim 10 wherein the debug data comprises eight 16-bit portions aligned on 10-bit blocks.

15. The circuitry of claim 14 wherein the selected portion comprises one of the eight 16-bit portions.

16. The circuitry of claim 9 wherein the logic means for activating a threshold signal comprises a compare circuit that outputs a logic one when the subset of the selected debug data portion is greater than or equal to the threshold value.

17. The circuitry of claim 9 wherein the logic means for outputting one of the match signal and the threshold signal comprises a 2:1 multiplexer circuit.

18. A method operable in a general purpose performance counter ("GPPC") connected to a bus carrying debug data for of analyzing a selected portion of the debug data, the method comprising:

activating a match signal when the selected portion of the debug data includes a specified bit pattern;

activating a threshold signal based on a comparison between at least a subset of the selected debug data portion and a threshold value; and

outputting one of the match signal and the threshold signal in response to a selection control signal.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the activating of a match signal comprises:

performing a bit-wise exclusive NOR operation between the selected debug data portion and a threshold register that is as wide as the selected debug data portion to create a first intermediary output;

performing an OR operation between the first intermediary output and an inverted mask ("mmask") to create a second intermediary output; and

performing an AND operation on the second intermediary output to generate the match signal.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the mmask is provided from a control status register ("CSR").

21. The method of claim 19 wherein the threshold value is provided from a control status register ("CSR") operating as the threshold register.

22. The method of claim 19 wherein the selected portion of the debug data comprises 16 bits.

23. The method of claim 19 wherein the debug data comprises eight 16-bit portions aligned on 10-bit blocks.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the selected portion comprises one of the eight 16-bit portions.

25. The method of claim 18 wherein the activating of a threshold signal comprises outputting a logic one when the subset of the selected debug data portion is greater than or equal to the threshold value.